

Amendments to the Claims

1 -24 (Cancelled)

25. (Currently amended) A transgenic plant cell comprising an endogenous nucleotide sequence ~~identical or at least 98% sequence similarity~~ and encoding a polypeptides ~~polypeptide having 3'-5' exonuclease activity or of SEQ ID NO: [[23]] 24,~~ and wherein said plant cell comprises a mutation in said endogenous nucleotide sequence, or in a regulatory region thereof.

26. (previously presented) The transgenic plant cell of claim 25, wherein the mutation is due to an insertion of a nucleic acid molecule.

27. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant cell according to claim 26, wherein the insertion of a nucleic acid molecule comprises one T-DNA border region.

28. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant cell according to claim 27, wherein the insertion comprises a transposable element.

29-37 (Cancelled)

38. (Previously presented) A transgenic plant or progeny thereof, or seeds thereof comprising the plant cell of claim 25.

39. (Previously presented) A transgenic plant or progeny thereof, or seeds thereof comprising the plant cell of claim 26.

40-43 (Cancelled)

44. (Currently amended) [[The]] A method for ~~reducing altering~~ the expression in a plant cell or plant of an endogenous nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide ~~comprising a 3'-5' exonuclease domain, wherein said polypeptide is identical to of~~

SEQ ID NO:24, wherein altering reducing the transcription or translation of said endogenous nucleotide sequence in the plant cell or plant comprises the step of:

- a) ~~expressing in said plant cell a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23 or a portion thereof, in sense orientation; or~~
- b) ~~expressing in said plant cell a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or a portion thereof, in anti-sense orientation; or~~
- c) ~~expressing in said plant cell a sense RNA of a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23 or a portion thereof, and an anti-sense RNA of said nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23 or a portion thereof, wherein said sense and said anti-sense RNAs are capable of forming a double stranded RNA molecule; or~~
- d) ~~expressing in said plant cell a ribozyme capable of specifically cleaving a messenger RNA transcript encoded by a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23; or~~
- e) ~~expressing in said plant cell a zinc finger protein that is capable of binding to a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or to a regulatory region thereof; or~~
- f) ~~modifying by insertional mutagenesis in said plant cell at least one chromosomal copy of the nucleotide sequence identical or having at least 98% sequence similarity and encoding a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to of SEQ ID NO:[[23]] 24 or of a regulatory region thereof.~~

45-46 (Cancelled)

47. (Currently amended) [[The]] A method for increasing altering the expression of a nucleotide sequence of interest in a plant cell or plant comprising the steps of:

- a) altering decreasing the expression in said plant cell or plant of an endogenous nucleotide sequence of said plant cell encoding a polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:24 that is identical or having at least 98% sequence similarity to SEQ ID NO:23; wherein step a) comprises:
- i) expressing in said plant cell or plant a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or a portion thereof, in sense orientation; or
  - ii) expressing in said plant cell or plant a nucleotide sequence identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or a portion thereof, in anti-sense orientation; or
  - iii) expressing in said plant cell or plant a sense RNA of a nucleotide sequence identical has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or a portion thereof, and an anti-sense RNA of said nucleotide sequence has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23, or a portion thereof, wherein said sense and said anti-sense RNAs are capable of forming a double stranded RNA molecule; or
  - iv) expressing in said plant cell or plant a ribozyme capable of specifically cleaving a messenger RNA transcript encoded by a nucleotide sequence identical has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:23; or
  - v) expressing in said plant cell or plant a zinc finger protein that is capable of binding to a nucleotide sequence to SEQ ID NO:23 or to a regulatory region thereof; or
  - vi) by modifying by insertional mutagenesis in said plant cell at least one chromosomal copy of the nucleotide sequence identical or having at least 98% sequence similarity and encoding a polypeptide of having 3' 5' exonuclease activity to SEQ ID NO:[[23]] 24 or of a regulatory region thereof; and
  - vii) b) introducing into said plant cell or plant a nucleic acid molecule comprising said nucleotide sequence of interest, wherein the expression of said nucleotide sequence of interest in said plant cell or plant is increased altered.

48-50(Cancelled)

51. (Currently amended) A method for stabilizing increasing the expression of an exogenous nucleotide sequence of interest in a transgenic plant cell or plant comprising the step steps of:

- a) obtaining a transgenic plant cell or plant having altered decreased expression in a plant cell of an endogenous nucleotide sequence of said plant cell or plant comprising a first expression cassette that encodes a polypeptide comprising a 3'-5' exonuclease domain, and wherein said polypeptide is identical or to an has the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:24; and
- b) introducing into said transgenic plant cell or plant of claim 25 an exogenous nucleotide sequence of interest, wherein the expression of said exogenous nucleotide sequence of interest in said transgenic plant cell is increased stabilized as compared to the expression of said nucleotide sequence of interest that was suppressed due to post-transcriptional gene silencing (PTGS) in a plant cell or plant lacking said first expression cassette.

52. (Currently amended) The method according to claim [[52]] 51, wherein said endogenous nucleotide sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:24 is identical or has at least 98% sequence similarity and encodes a polypeptide having 3'-5' exonuclease activity to a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:23.

53-57. (Cancelled)

58. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant cell of claim 25, wherein the mutation is a deletion or rearrangement.

59. (Previously presented) The transgenic plant cell of claim 25, wherein the mutation is a point mutation.

60. (New) The transgenic plant cell of claim 25, wherein the endogenous nucleotide sequence is SEQ ID NO:23.